

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE/CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT
PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

January 9, 2004

A meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Court Appointed Special Advocate and Children's Justice Act programs was held on Friday, January 9, 2004, at the Richmond Police Training Academy in Richmond.

Members Present

Members Not Present

Fred Orelove, Chair
Lauren Caudill
Mary Evans
A. Michael Hall, Vice Chair
Kent Hymel
Patrick Kelleher
Mindy Loiselle
Fred Orelove
Sharon England
B. J. Zarris

Paul O. Hirschbiel, Jr.
Pat Romano
Ruth Stone

DCJS Staff Present

Denise Marks
Laurel Marks
Melissa O'Neill
Holly Oehrlein

Call to Order

Dr. Orelove called the meeting to order at 10:00.

Approval of Minutes

Michael Hall motioned that the minutes from the October 10, 2003 meeting be approved. Dr. Kent Hymel seconded the motion. The minutes were then unanimously approved by the committee.

CJA Program Update

Holly Oehrlein provided an updated copy of the Three Year Plan to committee members and gave a brief review of each section. This document will be sent in with the CJA Grant which is generally due in April.

Improving Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse Conference: The 2004 trainings are scheduled for Roanoke in May and in Virginia Beach sometime in October. Ms. Oehrlein requested recommendations from the board members for possible speakers for these conferences. Mindy Loiselle suggested a speaker.

John Reid Training: A three-day “Child Abuse Seminar” will be provided by John E. Reid & Associates in Richmond on March 9 – 11 and in Fredericksburg from November 9 – 11. The cost of this training will be \$200.00 per person, which is being subsidized by the CJA Grant. Typically the cost ranges from \$395 to \$450 per person. Pat Kelleher gave a brief description of the John Reid program. An inquiry was made regarding the appropriateness of the training for Guardians Ad Litem. It was explained that the training is more for interviewing the perpetrator rather than the child victim, which is the reason it is limited to law enforcement and social service workers.

Discipline Specific Training: Speakers from the Forensic Medical Work Group will speak at the Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Spring Institute on March 24th regarding the selection of appropriate medical providers in evaluation of suspected child abuse victims. Guidance will be provided for the Commonwealth’s Attorneys when they are looking for these providers.

We will provide funding for a weeklong trial advocacy course on a shaken baby homicide in Williamsburg in June 2004.

The Forensic Medical Work Group is also looking at the feasibility of bringing the American Prosecutors Research Institute’s (APRI’s) “Finding Words” program to Virginia. “Finding Words” is a week-long intensive forensic interviewing program that focuses on interviewing kids.

The “Child Abuse: Virginia Statutes and Case Law” will be distributed to Commonwealth’s Attorneys at their Spring Institute in March and the Improving Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse conferences in May and October. This document was cross-referenced with the 3rd edition of APRI’s book on Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse and is in the development stage with the DCJS Graphics Department. It is planned to be completed in January.

The committee viewed a video titled “Through a Child’s Eyes”. Funding for the video was provided by the CJA Program. Ms. Ginny Duvall with the Chesterfield Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office assisted with production. DVDs and videos are available through the CJA Program. A plan will be developed on who these should be distributed to. A video and DVD will be provided to the Supreme Court. The video may also be shown at the “Improving Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse” conferences.

Citizen Review Panel

At a previous meeting it was requested that information on mandated teacher training be presented to the committee. However, the speaker was unable to present to the committee today. B. J. Zarris provided a handout on this topic, written by Linda Struck and briefly went over it. The document stated that effective July 1, 2004, Virginia teachers will be required to complete training on child abuse and neglect recognition and intervention as part of their licensure process pursuant to Code 22.1-298 of the *Code of Virginia*. It also listed available trainings and curricula and various websites that people can use. This information will go live on the DSS website as of 2/1/04. All local school districts will also have CD's to allow people to view it at home, in case they do not have access to the Internet. Ms. Zarris stated that if the committee still wanted a speaker to come in, she could try to get one. It was not requested at this time. Mike Hall reported that his area had attempted to provide some training at the pre-school conference where teachers can choose from a variety of topics to pick from for in-service, prior to school beginning. The only problem with this was that there was a wide variety of topics to choose from, and not everyone attended these sessions. He also reported that he has met with all principals and given them all the code sections that he felt were relevant to mandated reporting. He cautions principals to not be a "gate keeper" if a teacher makes a report. They are not to decide whether it is a legitimate report, they are to report it to the appropriate authority.

Differential Response System: One of the concerns that the sub-committee had at a meeting, is that in certain localities, the number of petitions has gone down. Ms. Zarris contacted Lelia Hopper who showed her how to find the statistics online for court involvement in all the Virginia localities. A comparison study will be done in July. DRS was implemented in May 2002, but it was not mandatory at that time. Ms. Zarris indicated that the Office of the Executive Secretary might be able to analyze some of the data. There were 5 piloted DRS jurisdictions and those data sets could possibly be examined now.

A discussion took place regarding the difference between "family assessments" and "investigations". It seems that if a case is deemed an assessment, the families aren't taking it as serious as they do an investigation. An evaluation of the differential response system will be done later this year.

Structured Decision Making (SDM): There will be informational meetings in late January across the state. Local Departments of Social Services have been invited to these information-sharing meetings. The Children's Research consultants will be there to explain what SDM is and how it has been developed in other states and counties. The participants will also have the opportunity to learn about SDM tools and what it would mean to be a pilot. The next phase of pilots are due to start in October. There are currently 3 localities in Virginia that are piloting this program (Norfolk, Chesapeake and Newport News).

General Assembly: There may be a bill that will try to change the standards of evidence from preponderance to clear and convincing. It was also reported that a bill has been filed regarding abandoned babies. This particular bill is SB 114 and has to do with putting the affirmative defense language in the civil code. There is another bill regarding clarification of Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Investigative teams.

It was reported that MCV is putting together a Child Advocacy Center that will be like a MDT for the investigation of child abuse and sexual abuse. The work on this project started about a year ago. If anyone knows of space where this could be located, SCAN has agreed to be the lead organization on this project.

CASA Program Update

Surrogate Parent Issue: It was determined in the last meeting that the appointment of CASA volunteers as Surrogate Parents was not as large a problem in the field as was initially thought. However, it was also decided that we would draft a written policy stating schools should not appoint CASA volunteers to serve as surrogate parents. Melissa O'Neill provided the committee with a copy of this and asked if any edits needed to be made. No one had any changes. Ruth Stone will provide additional review before sending it out to the locations for implementation.

New Director Training: A new director training took place in late 2003 with 4 directors. There will be another one in the near future with 3 more new directors. There have been 8 new directors in the past 6 months for the CASA program. Ms. O'Neill provided a Program Director Staff Turnover "Survey" to the committee. In the last 2 years, only 1 other director change was made, making the two-year total turnover at 9. Two of these changes occurred due to program changes (an Executive Director position was created in addition to the Program Director). The remaining changes were due to various reasons ranging from better job opportunities to changing family needs to poor job performance.

CASA Conference: The biennial CASA Conference will take place in Virginia Beach at the Sheraton Oceanfront on November 19th and 20th. DCJS looked at several other locations, but could not find a facility large enough to accommodate 300+ people at a reasonable cost. The Advisory Committee members are invited to attend. A conference committee is being formed and Advisory Committee members are welcome to serve.

CASA Statistics: Advisory Committee members were provided with statistics on the number of children served and case volunteers for fiscal year 2003 (July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003). A total of 4,335 children were served in 2003. The total volunteer Case Dollar Equivalency for 2003 was \$1,919,301.

Monitoring Visits: Sally Erny (National CASA) visited with DCJS and assisted in monitoring visits for National CASA grantees. There are three programs in Virginia that are currently National CASA Grantees in addition to DCJS.

Regulations: No suggestions were made by local programs for any changes.

License Plate Project: Delegate Vivian Watts introduced an amendment to the existing legislation for the CASA revenue producing license plates. The language needed to be amended to reflect the dissolution of the Virginia CASA Association. Monies generated from the sale of this plate will go directly to DCJS to administer for the CASA programs. Erin Osbourne (VCU MSW Intern) is working with one of her colleagues in graphics to produce the artwork for the plate. It was noted that the state of Ohio has a CASA plate and has raised over \$46,000.00.

Quality Assurance: The quality assurance program is progressing. Currently there are five programs completing the Self Assessment. Two programs are scheduled to complete the second wave.

Legislative Update: Erin Osborne will be providing follow-up information of the session this year.

New Business: Fred Orelove asked the members if they had any new business to discuss. There being none, the meeting adjourned at 1:15 and it was reported that the next meeting will take place on April 16th at the Richmond Police Training Academy.